

Acton 2020

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT HIGHLIGHTS

Key Points to Consider

Employment Based in Acton

- Acton is an important employment center in its nine town sub-region. Concord and Westford are the other important employment centers. Acton is expected to remain an important sub-regional employment center.
- In 2010, on average, 11,248 people were employed in Acton, an increase from 10,304 in 2000. (Jobs in Acton held by Acton residents and residents of other cities and towns.)
- Major categories of employment in Acton are retail trade, public administration including public schools, health care and social assistance, computer systems design and related services, education services (not including public schools), and eating and drinking establishments.
- Health care and social assistance and computer systems design and related services are the fastest growing categories of employment in Acton (147% and 112% respectively, between 2001 and 2009).
- Average weekly wages ranged from \$226 (used merchandise stores) to \$2,346

(scientific research and development services). This translates into an average annual salary range of about \$12,000 to \$122,000.

Acton's Labor Force

- In September, 2010 Acton had a labor force of 11,757 (Acton residents who hold jobs anywhere.)
- In September, 2010 5.6% of Acton's labor force was unemployed (compared to a statewide figure of 8.0%)
- The largest number of Acton residents are employed in the high wage/high education categories of management, computer/mathematical, educational/training/library, sales related and office/administrative support

Businesses

- In a survey¹ conducted in 2008, more than half (57%) of Acton residents reported doing more than half of their shopping outside of Acton
- According to the Mass. Department of Workforce Development there were 795 establishments (businesses of

¹ In Phase I of the Acton 2020 Project a mail-out survey of 1,479 residents asked how much of their shopping they did in Acton. The survey represented a 15.7% non-randomized sample of Acton residents.

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any kind) in Acton in the second quarter of 2010, the latest data available.) The number of businesses was roughly the same in 2000, grew to 860 in 2005, and then declined.

- Acton is a town of small businesses, measured by employees per business. The average number of employees per business in 2009 was 12. (Complete 2010 data for all 4 quarters is not yet available.)
- There are about 500 home based businesses in Acton. An unknown number of these are in the 795 businesses mentioned above, and some are not. The home based businesses are identified in a separate extensive data base compiled by the Claritas Company.

- The value of retail sales in 2007 in Acton was \$644,864,000.
- Motor vehicle and parts dealers and food and beverage stores accounted for 58% of all retail sales in 2002 and 64% in 2007.

Taxes

- Acton collects 12.9% of its property taxes from commercial and industrial property. This is in the middle of the percentages of the adjoining towns. (In Littleton it is 28.7%.)
- For the last eight years, Acton has had the highest residential tax rate of all towns around it, except for Stow which had a higher rate from 2003 to 2005.



West Acton Village



125 Nagog Office Park

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From Inventory Report Table 2.9: Percentage of Property Tax Revenues Raised from Residential versus Commercial/Industrial² Property in 2010

Town	Residential Property	Commercial/Industrial Property²
Acton	87.1 %	12.9 %
Boxborough	75.1 %	24.9 %
Carlisle	98.2 %	1.8 %
Concord	90.6 %	9.4 %
Littleton	71.3 %	28.7 %
Maynard	79.1 %	20.9 %
Stow	91.2 %	8.8 %
Sudbury	91.3 %	8.7 %
Westford	85.7 %	14.3 %

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue

² Includes Personal Property, which is largely the equipment in commercial and industrial businesses

Opportunities and Challenges posed by Existing Conditions

Acton has a strong and diverse economic mix of activities that provides a base for further growth. While further strengthening its role as a sub-regional employment center, Acton can improve its visual character by better design in new and redeveloped commercial and industrial properties.

- Floor-area ratios (the ratio of square footage in buildings to areas of lots on which they are located) in industrial areas and the villages can be increased to obtain greater density and more intensive utilization of the land.
- It is possible to seek home rule authority to establish a differential property tax policy in order to encourage and retain start-up ventures, micro-business incubators and micro-business cooperatives in Acton.
- A graduated commercial property tax increase, starting from a lower base, would make Acton desirable for start-up companies and entrepreneurs by reducing their operating costs for three to five years.
- Economic development and housing affordability are mutually dependent public policy issues. Businesses are attracted by a local labor force. Many businesses need lower skill workers with lower wages for maintenance, security and clerical jobs. Affordable housing helps to attract these kinds of workers and thus help economic development.
- Commercial development can be focused on creating more local opportunities to shop for goods and obtain services, and publicizing the shopping opportunities that already exist.
- Existing strip commercial development is unsightly but presents opportunities to redesign and redevelop it.